

TYPES OF CAREGIVERS

IN THIS GUIDE WE REFER TO FOUR TYPES OF CAREGIVERS:

Informal Caregivers are those caregivers who simply have assumed responsibility for a child in need without involvement from the court system, child protective services or other authorities. Informal caregivers may have physical custody of the child, but have limited rights to make decisions regarding a child in their care because they do not have legal custody.

Example:

Mrs. Jones, 50, a widow has cared for her three grandchildren since birth. Ms. Jones has not filed any court paperwork to obtain custody of her grandchildren and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has never been involved with the children.

Probate Court Legal Guardians are appointed by the court and are awarded legal and physical custody of a child. Once the guardianship is granted, parents or other interested parties cannot terminate the guardianship without a court order.

Example:

Susan and Tom were both tragically killed in an automobile accident, leaving two minor children. Susan's parents filed a petition for guardianship with the court requesting that they be given legal guardianship over the children so that they could consent to medical care and handle other matters on their behalf.

Foster Caregivers are those caregivers who care for a child who has been removed from the parents' home and is in the foster care system. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or the Probation Department has legal custody of the child who is then placed in the care of an approved caregiver. Some of these caregivers obtain legal guardianship, or adopt through the Juvenile Court.

Example:

Ms. Brown, 30, a bank manager, is rearing her youngest sister's two children. Her sister left the two children, ages 6 months and 2 years, alone in her apartment. Neighbors reported the sister to the police and child protective services took custody of the children and placed them with Ms. Brown. Ms. Brown completed the requirements to become an approved relative caregiver through the foster care system and is now taking care of the children.

Adoptive Parents are those caregivers who have participated in a court proceeding which occurs after both the mother's and father's parental rights have been terminated and are named as the child's parent. Adoption is permanent.

Example:

Claudia and Juan Escobar have been caring for their granddaughter, Elisa, since she was born. The Department of Children and Family Services placed Elisa in their care because she had been born prenatally exposed to drugs. Elisa's biological father was never identified and her mother was not able to complete a court-ordered program of parenting classes and drug rehabilitation. At 18 months, Mr. and Mrs. Escobar adopted Elisa.